

Preaching in the 19th Century

by Ian Murray

The 19th century was a great age of preaching, with notable preachers and significant events that shaped the church, but the men of the first half of the century differed significantly from those of the second half in their approach to preaching and their impact on society.

Duration: 59:44

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 6:4, Romans 10:14-15, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 4:12, James 1:22

Topics: "The Power of Preaching", "Revival in the Church"

Description

Ian Murray reflects on the profound impact of 19th-century preaching, emphasizing the dedication and long pastorates of influential preachers like Spurgeon and Palmer. He highlights the remarkable conversions and community transformations that resulted from their sermons, contrasting the evangelistic fervor of the first half of the century with the more contemporary, less impactful preaching of the latter half. Murray notes that while the earlier preachers focused on the heart and conscience, later preachers became more concerned with social issues and intellectualism, leading to a decline in spiritual fervor. He calls for a return to the principles of the first half of the century, urging a reliance on the Holy Spirit and a commitment to the ministry of the Word and prayer. The sermon concludes with a hopeful reminder of God's promises and the need for revival in preaching.

Transcript

This morning I'm preaching in the 19th century. Of course that is a very wide and great theme and the problem is the problem of organization as far as speaking on it is concerned. I don't need to remind you I'm sure that the 19th century was a great age of preaching.

Where we live in Edinburgh, Scotland, every day we see reminders of what the 19th century was in great church buildings that were once filled with eager hearers of the word of God. They were built out of necessity and today they languish that they stand as witnesses to a great age that has gone by. And this of course is a great age of preaching not simply in Scotland but right across the English-speaking world.

When you think of New England, some of the men whose names have been mentioned this week are the Hal Nettleton. We haven't spoken of Edwin Daw Griffin and Edward Payson and then outside of New England in other states there were such men as Archibald Alexander and William Nevins of Pittsburgh. Gardner Spring of New York, Daniel Baker in South Carolina and Benjamin Morgan Palmer we have

mentioned.

James Henley Thornwall, a great company of men, different denominations who preach with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And that of course was true in England also amongst the Anglican evangelicals there were men of whom we have spoken, Charles Bridges, John Charles Ryle, others Charles Simeon, Richard Cecil and of course in the English non-conformists we think at once of Charles Haddon Spurgeon but many others who shared with him in that great day of preaching. The same was true in the Principality of Wales and in other parts also.

It was a great age of preaching. Let me just mention one or two features of that preaching briefly as we move on. I think it is interesting to note how commonly these preachers sustained long pastorates.

Benjamin Palmer that I just mentioned went to New Orleans in 1856 and was there until his death in 1902. Well that really wasn't a long period for those days. Gardner Spring was 50 years in the brick church in New York.

John Angel James, one of the great English non-conformists, he went to Cars Lane Birmingham in England in 1805 to a congregation of about 50 people. 1805 to 1859. The longest pastorate that I know of is that of William J of Bath.

1789 he preached his first sermon in Bath in 1789. 1852 he was still in Bath. 62 years in the pastorate of Argyle Chapel in Bath.

It's an interesting point. More important as a feature of this preaching the remarkable effects which so often accompanied it. Now when we speak of remarkable effects I suppose we tend to think immediately of the numbers who were influenced.

But let me give you one example first of just one person that was converted by a sermon by an unknown preacher. In the month of January in 1814 the sermon was preached in Whitfield Chapel in Tottenham Court Road in London. Whitfield of course had been dead for many years.

It was a midweek service and on Tottenham Court Road a young man was walking that evening when he met the wife of his employer. And this good lady asked him to come to the service. He said afterwards he was never more, never, never was any man less prepared to hear the word of God than he was.

The sermon was on the text what shall it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lose his own soul. He was converted. His name was John Williams.

John Williams became the man who was the instrument of God in opening up vast areas of the whole Southern Pacific. He sailed to Tahiti in 1817, Solomon Islands, Veratonga, the New Hebrides. Vast area of the Southern Pacific was opened up because of one conversion that took place in Tottenham Court Road in 1814.

Let us never forget what can result from one conversion. Then of course there were many times when this preaching was followed by the conversion of large multitudes. I'd like to read a few lines from a service that took place in Scotland in the year 1816.

The preacher was John Macdonald. You may not have heard of his name. He ministered in a Highland parish.

In 1816 he was asked to preach in this country district in Perthshire. It was an open air service and the minister of the parish says he came to us in the fullness of the gospel of peace. There was a vast congregation collected reckoned between four to five thousand for I had spread the information far and wide.

He preached two hours and 20 minutes from Isaiah 54 verse 5 for thy maker is thine husband. I may say during the whole sermon there was hardly a dry eye. Eagerness to attend the word preached was written on every face while tears flowed copiously and literally watered the ground.

The most hardened in the congregation seemed to bend as one man and I believe if ever the Holy Spirit was present in a solemn assembly it was there. The general impression seemed to be a universal melting under the word. It will be a day remembered through ages of eternity as many I trust have enjoyed eternal good.

There was no doubt joy in heaven on that occasion. I could compare it to nothing but the days of the apostles after the day of Pentecost. The great influence of preaching in these days.

I hope a number of you have read the life of John Elias of Wales book that we publish and it doesn't sell nearly as well as it ought to. A man in this school of preaching and you can see in the biography of John Elias exactly this exemplified. How communities neighborhoods were transformed.

The same is true in the United States. For example between 1816 and 1826 without any new school evangelism in the old Presbyterian churches the congregations grew from the number of 920 in 10 years to 2,000 and the increase of membership was over 300 percent that was under old school doctrinal preaching. And then of course think of the influence of Spurgeon's preaching and sermons.

Those sermons began to be published in 1855 and concluded in 1917. The great influence of preaching. Now having said that I want to try to divide up my material in this way.

I do believe I'm sure it is true that there is a marked difference speaking generally between the school of preaching that prevailed in the first half of the century and the school of preaching that became predominant and popular before the end of the last century. There's a very decided contrast. By that I mean that the men that I we want to look at this morning were principally the men of the first half of the century.

Now of course there were men in the second half who were exceptions to what I'm going to say. Men like Spurgeon and Palmer and others. But these men by and large became increasingly isolated.

You know how Spurgeon and Dabney and these others they felt that they were the rear guard. That they were the old fogies as it were. They represented something that was passing away.

They prayed for its recovery. But they knew as they looked around them that their view of preaching was a view that was losing ground. And they died with faith that God would renew that vision.

But it was not the prevailing view by the time that they died. And the reason it was not the prevailing view was that this change had come about. Now I'd like to say a little then about the differences between the men of the first half and the men of the second half of the century.

One difference that strikes me is this. And you bear in mind of course I am generalizing. But I think it's a true generalization.

The first difference is that the men of the first half of the century very often were builders. That is to say they didn't inherit great churches. They didn't inherit large buildings.

They came as it were often upon almost virgin ground. They came like John Angel James to perhaps 50 people or so. And at the end of their days they left strong large churches.

The men of the second half of the century were the men who inherited what had been done before them. In other words the men of the first half undertook the hardest work. They were preeminently evangelists.

Daniel Baker of South Carolina who belonged to the first half. He made this comment on one occasion. He said it is easier to keep a house already built from falling down than to erect one when the materials are still in the forest.

Well that was the difference. They had to go to the forest and God enabled them to do that. This man John McDonald who I mentioned preaching in Scotland in 1816.

He traveled far and wide and was mightily used as an evangelist. On one occasion there was a godly woman in his church, his parish church at Ferentosh, who became irregular in her attendance at worship. And then it was heard that she was being seen rather often in neighboring churches.

They were evangelical churches, places called Rosales and Killernan. You would never have heard of these names I'm sure. Anyway this good woman was to be found there a little too often for the pleasure of the elders of her own church.

So she was ultimately, as things went in those days, she was brought before the session and she was asked the explanation. And this is what she said. Well she said at Killernan the sheep are fed and the Drosolus, the lambs, are given their portion.

And the elders not looking too pleased at these words, one of them said, and what happens here? Oh she said here the dead are raised. Well she meant that her minister was so consumed with the work of evangelism and conversion that sometimes she needed to go to get more food for the growing Christian life. Well there was probably some truth in that.

The emphasis in those days was the building of the church, as Baker says, taking the wood out of the forest to build. Now a second difference between the first half and the second half of the century, a very important one. The men of the first half of the century lived, of course, much nearer to the great evangelical revival.

Now that was true in England. People like William Jay personally met John Wesley. Many of William Jay's hearers had been hearers of George Whitefield.

They lived close to the awakening. It was even more true here in the United States because you had what Britain did not have, a second evangelical awakening beginning there at the end of the century. And it is very noticeable that the men of the first half of the century, they had deeply learned the lessons of those awakenings.

They consciously sought, in the first instance, to know the presence, the enabling of the Spirit of God. The lessons of the revivals they acted upon. If you read the life of John Elias or Thornwell or Griffin, any of these men, you'll see a note in their biographies which has very largely disappeared when you read the biographies of men at the end of the century.

You know the biographies of some of the later Victorians, men like Joseph Parker and Alexander White and others. They're interesting biographies but there's a vast difference between them and books like the life of John Elias and these others. Now thirdly, another difference.

It's noticeable that the men of the first half of the century, annexed to their Bibles, did most of their reading among the Puritan authors. The 18th century, after all, didn't produce a great deal of literature. Jonathan Edwards, some other brethren, but by and large the teachers of the church were still the Puritans.

It was said in England, for example, at the beginning of the 19th century that most of the Anglican evangelicals were profoundly acquainted with John Owen. Profoundly acquainted with John Owen. Richard Cecil, who was one of these Anglican evangelicals, his biographer says, his habit of reading remained with him to his last hours.

He was wholly engaged in reading the choicest parts of such authors as Leighton and Traill and Boston and Gurnall. He read Gurnall's Christian Armour without interruption during the last four days of his life, reading it when the last stroke came. And William Jay of Bath, he says, in divinity, in divinity for unction, illustration, excitement and effect, I have much preferred the old authors to most of the moderns.

And then just one quotation from the History of the Dissenters by Bogan Bennett, a book published in the 1830s, in the middle of this period when this school of preachers were at their height. And Bogan Bennett, speaking of this time, they say that the principles of the non-conformists and Puritans are highly valued by the present generation, can be inferred from the encouragement given to republish their works. Those of Charnock and Owen, Baxter, Watts and Doddridge and Edwards, which are so voluminous that nothing but extensive circulation could repay the cost.

These, they say, were being published and read in the 1830s. Now when you pass on 50 years, you find a great change. The men of the second half of the century were not reading the same books.

There was a revolution in reading. Fourthly, another difference, the men of the first half of the century concentrated on the work of the pulpit. They made a great deal of that text in the Book of Acts.

We will give ourselves to the ministry of the Word and Prayer. When Mr. Martin and I were in Melbourne, we enjoyed seeing a great portrait of John G. Paton of the New Hebrides. And underneath that striking portrait, the words of the text, this one thing I do.

And that's what these preachers felt. They did supremely one thing. William Jay uses the illustration of a visitor who came to England, and he was driving on a stagecoach, sitting up beside the driver.

And as they went through these villages and places, the visitor was naturally very interested, and he would say to the coach driver, and who lives there? And the coach driver would say, I don't know. And then the visitor would ask him, what's that place? Or where is this? Or whatever. The coachman didn't seem to be able to answer any of these questions.

So the visitor in disgust said in the end, do you know anything? The coach driver said, I know how to drive a coach. And William Jay used that with regard to preachers. We may not know a lot of things, but if we are servants of Christ, the one thing we ought to know is to preach.

Thomas Chalmers, whose name was mentioned by John DeWitt the other evening. Thomas Chalmers, very interesting ministerial biography. He was a very able man.

Went to this parish of Kilmanny early in the last century. He was so able that he found it possible to spend most of his week in the University of St Andrews. He taught.

He was quite a scientist, besides being a preacher. He wrote articles and was making quite a name for himself. And then on Saturdays, he found he could put together some material for the pulpit and sometimes even on Sunday morning.

But there it was. And this went on comfortably until about 1810. And then Chalmers was converted.

Was converted. And what a transformation. What a transformation.

He had an old elder who used to call to visit him. He always befriended this young minister. And this old elder, after Chalmers' conversion, he said to him one day, he said, Mr. Chalmers, when I used to call on you, I never found you reading the Bible.

But now when I come, I find you doing nothing else. And Chalmers' memorable reply was, all too little, John. All too little.

Well, then Chalmers was called to a large church in Glasgow. The largest city in Scotland. And when he got there, he found that ministerial traditions were well established.

And it was customary for ministers to attend all funerals. Customary for them to honour society committees with their presence. Customary for them to open various functions and to be involved in a great deal of public life.

Chalmers wrote in his diary, I am gradually separating myself from all this trash. And, and he said, I long to establish it as a doctrine that the life of a town minister should be what the life of a country minister might be. And his entire time disposable to the purposes to which the apostles gave themselves wholly.

That is, the ministry of the word and prayer. And because Chalmers was able to do that, we have benefited from Robert Murray M'Chayne and Andrew Boner and others. He made a very important decision.

And that decision, as I say, affected the lives of others also. Now when you come to the second half of the century, you notice the difference. These men were spreading themselves much more widely and a good deal thinner.

The men of the first half, this one thing I do. Now then, fifthly, the preaching, again speaking generally and with very eminent exceptions, the preaching generally was different. Different, of course, in a number of ways.

But in one way, let me put this first at any rate, it's noticeable how the preaching of the first half of the century dealt far less with any contemporary issues. John Angel James has a fine book published in the

first half of the century, 1847. An earnest ministry.

The want of the times. Some of you I'm sure know it. And if you read James, you forget he was writing in the 1840s.

It could have been the 1740s or whatever. He's concerned that men are brought face to face with eternity. That the realities of the gospel and the world to come are set before men.

And that was the characteristic of that period. They said very little about contemporary issues of any kind. But, and this is the important thing, although they said so little about contemporary issues, they did much more to influence contemporary events.

The men of the second half of the century had much more to say about social events and educational trends and all the rest. And they did far less actually to influence those things. W. G. T. Shedd has a very good testimony of this point.

Talking about Puritan preaching, he says, That preaching, which, upon the face of it, does not seem even to recognize that man has any relations to this little ball of earth, which takes him off the planet entirely and contemplates him simply as a sinner in the presence of God. That preaching, so destitute of all literary, scientific, economical, political elements and illusions, was, he says, nevertheless, by indirection, one of the most fertile causes of the progress of England and America. So Shedd.

And a word from Joseph Parker, one of the second half men, very much so. And in his autobiography, he says a word about the previous school of men. And he gives this, I think, remarkable confession and testimony.

He talks about the doctrines those men preach, the infallibility of scripture, the eternal punishment of those who die impenitent and other doctrines. But then he says, before giving it up, that is, that system of belief, we ought, at least, he says, to do justice to it. These may be old-fashioned doctrines, but they created missionary societies, Sunday schools, hospitals, orphanages, refuges for the penitent.

They gave every child a new value, every father a new responsibility, every mother a new hope, and constituted human society into a new conscience and a new trust. Very true. These men who didn't seem to deal with contemporary issues, in fact, did vastly more than those who followed them.

Now, that's my fifth point, the difference in the preaching. But, of course, the preaching differed in a whole number of ways. Just last night, I read for the first time these words, and I thought I'd read them to you this morning.

It illustrates the point I come to now. These men of the first half of the century, they aimed at the conscience, they aimed at the heart. It was said of Whitfield that he got into the hearts of men and he overpowered them.

William Nevins of Pittsburgh, commenting on the change that he could see coming before he died, he says, there is a great deal of preaching which is only didactic, argumentative, nearly indicative, and simply inviting. It teaches, it reasons and invites, but, he says, it does not apply, does not entreat, does not warn, persuade, exhort. The preacher seems satisfied with having done as he supposes his duty, and does not seem or appear to care whether his hearers do theirs.

Now, the quotation I want to give you from Benjamin Morgan Palmer in New Orleans. Here's a visitor dropping into his church for the first time. He asks one of the ushers at the door if he can have a seat in a good position, explains he's a visitor.

The usher apologizes and tells him there's no room in the body of the church, he has to go to the gallery. He finds his way to the gallery and he says that Palmer's text was, the cup that my father gave me, shall I not drink it? He describes something of the sermon. Christ's submission to suffering.

Why our Lord submitted in the spirit that he did? And then he moved on to the believers, he's dealing now in the application of the sermon, the believers submission to suffering, as being the father's will. Well, he says, the preacher had not proceeded very far with this theme. When I perceived that he was moving upon what a certain poet has termed the unknown seas of feeling in my heart, I tried to show myself a man and keep my handkerchief in my pocket.

But it was no use. The man who sat next to me was a rough and unlettered man, a man of the world. He found it convenient just at this time to brush his rough hand over his eyes in order to see better.

I looked down upon the 1,000 people beneath me and they reminded me of the tops of the mulberry trees when the wind is shaking them. The men were shielding their faces with their palm leaf fans while their wives made open use of their handkerchiefs. Now, Palmer was no sentimental preacher.

He was a very doctrinal preacher. But when he came to this point in the sermon, when all the teaching was becoming clear, that was the condition of the congregation. They preached to the heart.

Now, moving on then, if this is true that there was this general difference between the first and second half of the century, just a few reasons to explain that. Why did it happen? What were the causes that contributed to this revolution in preaching? Well, of course, there were many and I can only list a few. The first perhaps, not first in order of importance, but I put it first, evangelical religion at the beginning of the last century was not a very fashionable thing.

George Whitefield was not the great preacher in his day. You know, people garnish the sepulchres of the prophets. It was not a respectable thing to be an earnest evangelical at the beginning of the last century.

But as time went on, as the influence of the evangelical and Calvinistic truths spread and grew, then in a subtle kind of way, the offense seemed to lessen, became more respectable and more acceptable. Now, in a sense that's understandable. But in another sense, it created a whole series of dangers.

Jesus says, woe unto you when all men speak well of you. And in that process of development, something seemed to be lost. And secondly, and I suppose connected with it, in the second half of the century, there came a new mood of liberality and of tolerance and a dislike of clear-cut opinions.

Of course, the Catholic spirit is essential in Christians. We have said, have we not, Brethren, what injury is done to the cause of Christ by a spirit which is not Catholic in the best sense. And yet at the same time, it must be true that indifference to truth is equally a great evil and something that kills preaching.

And that's what happened. Ryle talks about men coming out of theological schools. He says they were as round and smooth as billiard balls.

As smooth as billiard balls. And somebody mentioned how much offense Spurgeon gave when he was a young man. And he gave offense because he was really out of the spirit of his age.

It was too polite and too respectable to put things as clear and straight as Spurgeon put them. In other words, the mood of the times was changing. And thirdly, there came into the churches an unhealthy concern for success, for numbers, for influence.

The men of the first half of the century were given great influence, but they didn't really seek it. They sought to honor God. They sought the unction of the spirit of God.

And in that seeking, God blessed their labors. In the second half of the century, it is more noticeable that there's a concern about what will keep our churches large, what will interest people, all that sort of thing. James Henley Thornwell, whose biography the banner has reprinted, writing in 1846, puts his finger on the change that he saw coming.

He says, our system of operations gives an undue influence to money. And where money is the great want, numbers must be sought. And where an ambition for numbers prevails, doctrinal purity must be sacrificed.

The root of this evil is the secular spirit of our ecclesiastical institutions. What we want is a spiritual body, a church whose power lies in the truth and in the presence of the Holy Spirit. To unsecularize the church should be the unceasing aim of all who are anxious that the ways of Zion should flourish.

Page 291 of Thornwell's life. Then further, the second half of the century witnessed a compromise with what I think we can call the besetting sin of the later 19th century. And that sin was the idolizing of the intellect.

And how subtle Satan is. The 19th century, I don't need to remind you, was the age of the great expansion of knowledge and learning and schools and universities. And all the new disciplines developed.

And people began to read. Education multiplied. And in the midst of all that resurgence, the church felt that she mustn't be behind the times.

She mustn't be in the backwoods. The church must show that she was also in possession of all truth. The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

And therefore it belonged to the church to be in the vanguard of every form of intellectual development. Now there is surely much that is right in that. But just because there was much that was right, the danger came in.

And the danger was that ministers became concerned that they should be regarded as thinking men. That they should be abreast of the latest books that came out of Germany or wherever. And when the question of who is going to be called to the ministry was being discussed, the great priority became that we must have men of talent.

That's the word that was used. Men of talent. And the better the university they can be sent to, so much more influential will be their ministries if we can get these men into the pulpits.

And behind all that was this great danger that the idolizing of the intellect was becoming a great sin. And that sin entered the church. And it entered the church when, as Mr. Pronunciation was mentioning in

connection with the Netherlands, the teaching of the word of God became moved into the secular realm.

Into the universities. You know we take it for granted now that if a man is going to be a big name, horrible expression, pardon it. But you know what I mean.

He needs to have at least some letters there behind his name. We forget that until little more than a hundred years ago, these distinctions were unknown in the church practically. The great seminaries that did the work of raising prophets and preachers, men like, seminaries like Princeton Theological Seminary, they gave no degrees for many years after their commencement.

But then in the 1750s, 1760s, the whole idea came in. London University began to give Bachelor of Divinity degrees. About that time.

Quite modern. But how quickly the idea caught on. And with it that caught on, the idea that the men who are going to teach and do the curriculum and so on, they have to be specialists of course in all the latest knowledge.

They have to know what's being said in Leipzig and Berlin and so on. And of course the ordinary preacher and pastor, he doesn't know that, so he can't train men for the ministry. Training for the ministry became a specialized thing.

And it's all summed up in the words of the psalmist. They mingled with the heathen and they learned their works. There was no distinction made between knowledge that stood in reverent awe of the Word of God and knowledge which undermined the authority of the Word of God.

The idolatry of the intellect. C. H. Spurgeon says of the men who were coming out of the colleges at this later date, he says they know a little of everything except vital godliness and puritanic divinity. They are very great at anything metaphysical, geological, anthropological or any other ology except theology.

Now that was the young Spurgeon. But the older men like John Angel James and William Jay, they pointed the same warnings. They said the church is going in the wrong direction in uniting with the universities and accepting these theological degrees and so on.

Well brethren, these are some of the reasons why the great change came. One last one remains. And I need only to mention it because we have been dealing with it time and again during the week in the various sessions.

The influence of the decline of Calvinistic belief. How radically that affected the public. Preaching, Dr. Lloyd-Jones says, preaching is theology coming through men who are on fire.

No good being on fire if you haven't got the theology. No good having the theology sometimes too if you're not on fire. Very good definition of preaching.

Theology coming through men who are on fire. The theology went and so also did the influence. The old preachers like Griffin and Nettleton and Payson, they preached in such a way that men asked the question that the disciples asked, who then can be saved? And that prepared the way for that answer.

With man it is impossible, but not with God. They knew that it was not their business to induce regeneration. It was not their business to count converts.

They knew that God had to bestow life. God has to quicken the dead. And they preached with that conviction.

And that's not a technical difference. That's a different ethos to the ethos of a man who doesn't believe that and doesn't understand. And equally, if it's true that our influence in the pulpit is dependent upon what we are out of the pulpit, these men out of the pulpit were humble, God-fearing men.

It wasn't a man-centered age. They wouldn't care even for us, I'm sure, to be speaking about them to this extent today. But when the fear of God was weakened, then preaching and churches became so much more man-centered and personality-centered.

And revivals in the old sense disappeared. Spirit of God was grieved and quenched. Somebody was saying to me a few days ago, I was asking him about a glorious revival in Charleston, South Carolina in 1841.

And it appears there's no record of that revival. But my friend said, yes, but that kind of event was no uncommon thing then. There was no point in recording every such awakening.

But then, as you know, a day came when these things became so rare that they were hardly ever seen in the church at all. Well, I want to close with John Bunyan because that's the best point I know to close out. The first half of this century has been the dark half.

For God's mercy, we do believe that there's a quiet rising tide of prayer and conviction and concern. And it's as though, again, we've been like Christians and hopeful in Doubting Castle. Do you remember Bunyan's description of how, having fallen asleep on the ground of giant despair, they're put there in those dungeons? How they wring their hands and tremble at the prospect and wonder what the future will bring? And then Bunyan says on Saturday night about midnight, they began to pray.

And towards the breaking of the day, Christian stood up like a man amazed. And he said, oh, what a fool I've been. I have in my bosom a key called promise, which is able to open every lock in Doubting Castle.

And hopeful said, that's good news, my brother. Pull it out of thy bosom and try. And so he did.

And that's our position. We have keys called promise. How much more, says our Lord, will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the same glorious Savior to whom we come this day. May God then cause us to abound in hope to use these great promises and to humbly learn to walk with our God and Savior. Shall we pray? Oh Lord, our heavenly Father, we do seek together again to give thanks to thee for thy mercies to us at this time.

Lord, we thank thee that thou art gathering thy people from every kindred and tongue and tribe. We thank thee that thy word is not bound. We thank thee for thy servants this day who in the distant corners of the earth are serving thee and lifting up the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that thy hand and thy spirit would be upon them. And Lord, we pray for ourselves. Help us to see more and more our need and our emptiness.

But grant us also we beseech thee to know him in whom is all fullness of grace and truth. We bless thee that thou has shown us that we are not our own, but that we belong to our faithful Savior. And we pray

thee, O Lord, that thou would be our strength, our refuge at all times.

Grant us thy help and blessing as we depart from this conference. We pray for safety and travel. We pray we may be reunited with families and congregations and that thou would make us all a blessing to them.

And we commit to thee our final gathering this morning. Do thou, O Lord, make thy presence deeply known in all our hearts that we may fall and worship thee, our God and our Redeemer. Lord, receive our thanks and pardon our sins.

For Jesus' sake, amen. This lecture message is made available to you by the Banner of Truth Trust in America and in Edinburgh, Scotland, in cooperation with the Trinity pulpit in Essexville, New Jersey. These conferences are held each year in America, and information regarding future conferences may be obtained by writing to the office of the Banner of Truth Trust in America at the following address, Banner of Truth Trust, Post Office Box 621 Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 17013.

Also, a list of the reprinted works of great theologians and many outstanding scholars of today may be sent to you on request by writing to the Banner of Truth Trust. Now, let Ernie Reese, Sr., pastor of the Pompano Beach Baptist Church in Pompano Beach, Florida, tell you something of these conferences. This is our sixth ministers and elders conference in the United States.

However, in England the Banner of Truth has had this type of conference for over 25 years. I think my first conference was 1962. I believe that would be about 22 years ago.

To my knowledge, they have all been used in a great measure, used of God to instruct and at times to search us and always to encourage those in the ministry. And I pray that this will be no exception. I have every reason to believe that the men attending such a conference are here not looking for frothy religious excitement, but rather biblical and experimental substance.

Of course, that can only be received from the Bible. Men who come to these conferences are men who desire to be instructed and desire to be searched, like David. Men who desire to be used.

And certainly, as already has been indicated, we all come because we need encouragement. And age doesn't change those things. You're still needed when you're older, those three things.

We have a hymnal back in our churches. The name of the hymnal is, Brethren, we are met to worship. And one of the lines, I think the line is, Brethren, we are met to worship and adore of the God we love.

But there's a line that says this, All is vain, except all is vain, unless the spirit of the Holy One come down. And it doesn't matter about the conference or the speakers or spiritual goods, that same thing is true here. Unless the spirit of the Holy One come down.

And I pray that that will be our portion this week. If you would like a listing of these messages from the Banner of Truth conferences and many other Banner of Truth tapes from the Lester Conference in England, along with thousands of other messages, you may write to the Mount Olive Tape Library, Incorporated of these excellent messages for a fee of four dollars. Permission for the reproduction of this tape for further distribution should be requested from either the Banner of Truth Trust or the Mount Olive Tape Library, Incorporated, Post Office Box 422, Mount Olive, Mississippi, 39119.

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